



# Chapter 6



# Ethical and Social Issues in Information Systems



# Management Information Systems

## Chapter 4 Ethical and Social Issues in Information Systems

### Understanding Ethical and Social Issues Related to Systems

- **Ethics**
  - Principles of right and wrong that individuals, acting as free moral agents, use to make choices to guide their behavior
- **Information systems and ethics**
  - Information systems raise new ethical questions because they create opportunities for:
    - Intense social change, threatening existing distributions of power, money, rights, and obligations
    - New kinds of crime



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## Chapter 4 Ethical and Social Issues in Information Systems

### Understanding Ethical and Social Issues Related to Systems

- **A model for thinking about ethical, social, and political issues**
  - Society as a calm pond
  - IT as a rock dropped in pond, creating ripples of new situations not covered by old rules
  - Social and political institutions cannot respond overnight to these ripples — it may take years to develop etiquette, expectations, laws
  - Requires understanding of ethics to make choices in legally gray areas



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## Chapter 4 Ethical and Social Issues in Information Systems

### Understanding Ethical and Social Issues Related to Systems

- **Five moral dimensions of information age**
  - **Major issues raised by information systems include:**
    - Information rights and obligations
    - Property rights and obligations
    - Accountability and control
    - System quality
    - Quality of life



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### Understanding Ethical and Social Issues Related to Systems

- **Four key technology trends that raise ethical issues**
  - **Computing power doubles every 18 months**
    - Increased reliance on, and vulnerability to, computer systems
  - **Data storage costs rapidly declining**
    - Multiplying databases on individuals
  - **Data analysis advances**
    - Greater ability to find detailed personal information on individuals
    - Profiling and nonobvious relationship awareness (NORA)
  - **Networking advances and the Internet**
    - Enables moving and accessing large quantities of personal data



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## Chapter 4 Ethical and Social Issues in Information Systems

### Ethics in an Information Society

- **Basic concepts form the underpinning of an ethical analysis of information systems and those who manage them**
  - **Responsibility:** Accepting the potential costs, duties, and obligations for decisions
  - **Accountability:** Mechanisms for identifying responsible parties
  - **Liability:** Permits individuals (and firms) to recover damages done to them
  - **Due process:** Laws are well known and understood, with an ability to appeal to higher authorities



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### Ethics in an Information Society

- **Ethical analysis: A five-step process**
  1. Identify and clearly describe the facts
  2. Define the conflict or dilemma and identify the higher-order values involved
  3. Identify the stakeholders
  4. Identify the options that you can reasonably take
  5. Identify the potential consequences of your options



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### Ethics in an Information Society

- **Professional codes of conduct**
  - Promulgated by associations of professionals
    - E.g. AMA, ABA, AITP, ACM
  - Promises by professions to regulate themselves in the general interest of society
- **Real-world ethical dilemmas**
  - One set of interests pitted against another
  - E.g., Right of company to maximize productivity of workers vs. workers right to use Internet for short personal tasks